



DRAFT

STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES

Retrospective Rating Program • PO Box 44180 • Olympia, Washington • 98504-4180
<http://www.Lni.wa.gov/retro/>

DATE: October 15, 2001

TO: Retro Advisory Committee

FROM: Frank Romero (Chair), Retro Program Manager

SUBJECT: Minutes of October 9, 2001 retro advisory committee meeting

The meeting was called to order at approximately 1:05 PM, by committee chair **Frank Romero**. Introductions were made, and the agenda was reviewed by the committee. It was moved, seconded and carried to accept the minutes of the August 14, 2001, meeting as published.

John Stebbins, Industrial Hygienist from L&I's WISHA program, gave a brief update on hearing conservation and testing done in the workplace. He clarified that the department does not have a database of industries where hearing loss claims are being filed. John indicated that while L&I has extensive data on high noise environments like sawmills, there is virtually no data on other workplaces like sewing machine operators and cosmetologists. Frank stressed the need to educate the business community about baseline exams before new hires are exposed to any workplace noise. **Terry Peterson** (*Comprehensive Risk Management*) explained that baseline measurements are important, especially with the younger workers today who are entering the workplace with pre-existing hearing impairment. **Jim Gurnea** (*Associated Industries*) asked if the standard would be revised to reflect the level of hearing loss at pre-employment showing up in the younger workforce. John indicated that any change would have to come from the medical part of L&I and not WISHA. **Steve George** (*Hop Growers of Washington*) and Jim asked that L&I have someone attend a future meeting to help clarify why some doctors still identify an employer as having responsibility even though the worker wore hearing protection. Frank indicated he would try to get a medical doctor to attend a future meeting to discuss this topic.

Anne Soiza, Program Manager for Training and Outreach from L&I's WISHA program, gave an update on the grant program. Anne explained that the grant program was not funded for the current biennium but that she understood that representatives from business and labor might seek legislation to fund the grant program during the second year of this biennium. Anne gave several examples of how the grant money was awarded and shared the results of one grant that bought a thermal camera for a local fire department and how the camera helped save three lives. Anne also shared that this grant helped produce the information that other fire departments needed to convince their officials to procure this type of technology. Another example shared was a series of plays that targeted Hispanic agriculture workers and the focused on protective clothing and equipment and the use of chemicals. The live plays were done in Spanish and were helpful in getting the safety message to a class of workers who not only do not speak or read English but often do not read Spanish either. **Steve George** asked several questions regarding the accounting of the \$5.0 million of initial grant money, how much was spent on administrative costs and what happened to any unspent grant money. Anne explained that roughly 10% of the grant money

DRAFT

was used for administrative costs and during the start up phase the money was used to fund one position and towards the end of the grant program there were five staff employed.

Bill Vasek, Senior Actuary for Insurance Services, gave an update on the 2002 rate proposal, including a comprehensive explanation of the increase in the supplemental pension fund. Bill also shared with the group that preliminary numbers for the upcoming retro refunds appeared to be slightly higher than last year which was an average 21%. If the numbers hold true the next round of refunds appear to be in the 23% range. Committee members and those in the audience did not ask Bill any questions regarding the material he presented.

Frank next gave an update on the vacant retro coordinator position in the Tacoma office. He indicated that L&I was doing a review of each vacant position to determine the need for the position and to make sure that all positions were doing things that complimented the agency priorities. **Steve George** asked if any decision had been made on what work duties the retro claims staff might perform once hearing loss claims are returned to claims administration. Frank explained that retro staff were continuing to do hearing loss claims and that the activity would continue for the remainder of the year. Frank indicated that once hearing loss claims are returned to claims administration that he would seek input from the retro community on what type of services they think the retro claims staff should offer.

The next order of business was an update on the current rule making changes that Labor & Industries is considering. These include the membership list rule, adding two new categories to the industry group table and establishing a new rule that explains how the cost of certain claims are apportioned to employers. **Steve George** asked for an update on the recent court decision. Frank stated that Superior court had not published the decision yet and that L&I has not met to consider options. Frank said he would keep committee members and participating organizations updated once a decision is reached by L&I.

The final order of business was an update on plans for next years safety conference in Spokane. Frank indicated that retro was planning on doing something on hearing loss claims.

With that, Frank thanked all who attended, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.

The next meeting will begin at 1:00 PM Tuesday, January 15, 2002.